

The Progressive Movement

Reforming Industrial, Immigrant, Urban America

Definition of Progressivism

- ✿ Gradualist reform movement focused on improving, leveling & quieting the concerns of industrial capitalism
- ✿ Not a radical or revolutionary movement
- ✿ Arose out of the middle class not the working class
- ✿ Belief that government could be the solution to society's problems

Origins of Progressivism

- ✿ Cyclical trends--Reform decades of 1770s, 1800s, 1840s, 1870s
- ✿ Millennialism--Coming of the Penultimate Age
- ✿ Early reformers such as Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Thorstein Veblen & Charles Seldon.

Origins of Progressivism: Political Corruption

- ✿ Hope for the Grant Administration
 - ⊕ Voters thought Grant would not be "politics-as-usual";
 - ⊕ "Waving the bloody shirt"--Grant would honor memory & legacy of Civil War.
- ✿ Cronyism & Corruption in the Grant Administration
 - ⊕ "Jubilee Jim" Fisk, Jay Gould & "Black Friday"
 - ⊕ Credit Mobilier Scandal
 - ⊕ Whiskey Ring

Origins of Progressivism-Political Machines

- ✿ Tweed Ring in New York--Tammany Hall Political Machine
 - ⊕ Success based on bribery, graft, kickbacks & election fraud;
 - ⊕ True power, however, came from patronage & working-class political base.
- ✿ Showed that urban government could serve the people, but could it be done without the corruption?

Origins of Progressivism-Agrarian Revolt

- ✿ Populism of the West--Omaha Platform & William Jennings Bryan
 - ⊕ Farmers dependent on railroads & bankers to successfully get product to market;
 - ⊕ Wanted public control of railroad--regulation of rates was not enough;

- ⊕ Wanted more money in circulation to pay off debts--inflation helps debtors.
- ⊗ Advocated government regulation, but would it catch on across the nation?

Progressivism as a Middle-class Movement

- ⊗ Rose in response to more radical Socialist challenges
 - ⊕ Eugene V. Debs (Presidential candidate in 1904, 1908 & 1912) & Victor Berger (Socialist mayor of Milwaukee, WI);
 - ⊕ Fear of growing immigrant influence;
 - ⊕ Intellectuals such as Jack London, Helen Keller & Charlotte Perkins Gilman.
- ⊗ Rise of "Muckrakers" in major magazines
 - ⊕ *McClure's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Collier's*, *Everybody's*
 - ⊕ Lincoln Steffens (Machine politics in *Shame of the City*), Ida Tarbell (Standard Oil), Ray Stannard Baker (Race in *Following the Color Line*)
- ⊗ Central role of women reformers
 - ⊕ Women's Christian Temperance Union, Anti-Saloon League;
 - ⊕ Settlement House movement--Jane Addams & Hull House;
 - ⊕ Florence Kelly & National Consumer League often joined forces with Women's Trade Union League.
- ⊗ Major, Mobilizing, Solidifying Events
 - ⊕ Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire--Following a successful □International Ladies Garment Workers Strike;
 - ⊕ Publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* followed by passage of Pure Food & Drug Act.

Goals of Progressivism

Addressing Society's Ills on Many Levels

Correcting Abuses & Injustices of Urban Industrialization

- ⊗ Trust-Busting
 - ⊕ Elkins Act addressed abuses of railroad rebates;
 - ⊕ Hepburn Act expanded power of the Interstate Commerce Commission to deal with "Bad Trusts"
- ⊗ Regulation & Consumer Protection
 - ⊕ Meat Inspection Act provided for safety of meat shipped across state borders;
 - ⊕ Pure Food & Drug Act provided for true product labeling.

- ✿ Early Environmentalism
 - ⊕ Preservation accomplished with National Park System;
 - ⊕ Conservation more popular, especially forestry management.

Restoring Control of Gov't to the People

- ✿ Electoral Reform
 - ⊕ Secret Ballot ended public & recorded voting that often led to coercion & intimidation;
 - ⊕ Direct Primary took selection of candidates away from the "smoke-filled backrooms" of the political parties;
 - ⊕ 17th Amendment allowed for direct election of Senators.
- ✿ Legislating at the Ballot Box
 - ⊕ Initiative--Voters could propose laws for consideration;
 - ⊕ Referendum--Voters could vote on passage of laws directly;
 - ⊕ Recall--Immediate removal of public officials by vote of the people.

Pragmatism, Scientific Principles & Efficient Management

- ✿ Replaced of elected mayors & city councils with City Managers & County Commissions;
- ✿ Instituted Civil Service reform to end spoils system & cronyism;
- ✿ Municipal ownership & operation of utilities;
- ✿ "Wisconsin Idea"--Incorporating the expertise of university professionals in public policy;
- ✿ Complicated Nature of Progressivism: Drive for efficiency often led to centralization of government policy that were often less than democratic.

Emphasizing Social Justice, Humane Treatment & Morality

- ✿ Development of Social Work to formalize charity & welfare;
- ✿ Institutions such as the settlement houses provided direct services to the community;
- ✿ Belief that education for a greater portion of the population would solve problems of the present & future;
- ✿ 18th Amendment finally brought about Prohibition of alcohol.

Election of 1912--Flood Tide of Progressivism

- ⊗ Incumbent Taft the practical Progressive
- ⊗ Return of Roosevelt & the Square Deal
 - ⊕ Control of Corporations, Consumer Protection & Conservation of Natural Resources;
 - ⊕ Displaces Robert La Follette as the candidate of the Progressive Party.
- ⊗ Democrat Woodrow Wilson & the New Freedom
 - ⊕ Attacked the "Triple Wall of Privilege" with antitrust legislation, monetary changes & tariff reductions.
- ⊗ Eugene V. Debs (Socialist not Marxist) polled nearly a 6%, a million votes.